THE HEART OF EUROPE · CH. PERGLER

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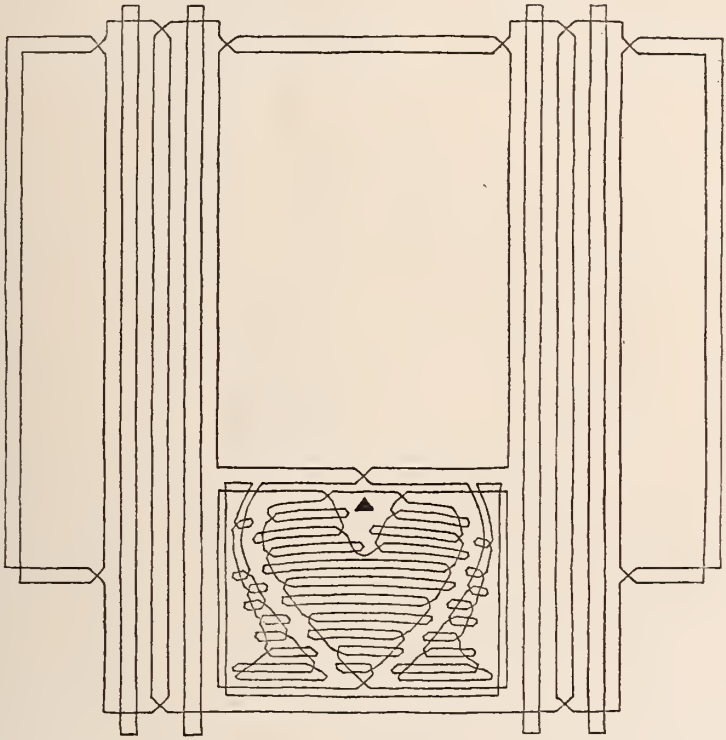
CH. PERGLER: THE HEART OF EUROPE



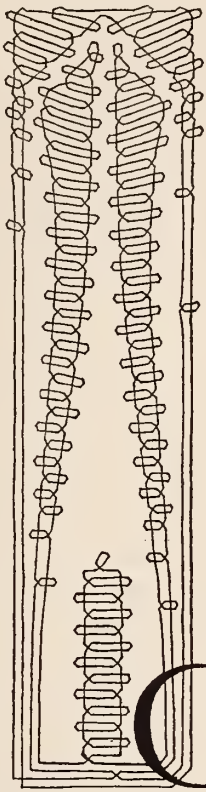
The Cathedral of Saint Vitus at Prague, founded in the tenth century, completed in the year 1384

THE HEART OF EUROPE

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED BY CHARLES PERGLER IN WASHINGTON, DECEMBER 11, 1916, AT A CONFERENCE OF OPPRESSED OR DEPENDENT NATIONALITIES. WITH A FOREWORD BY PROFESSOR ALOIS F. KOVARIK, PH.D., D.SC., YALE UNIVERSITY



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FOREWORD

Civilization cannot make true progress without liberty and justice, and it needs peace as well. Without liberty and justice, however, peace is ephemeral. Without peace, progress is or at least seems to be slow. Yet history offers plenty of examples of various social struggles and wars fought to establish the rights of man as an individual and the rights of nations as collective units with the resulting greater progress during the peace periods that followed such struggles. History also gives us examples of "might is right" with the resulting retarding

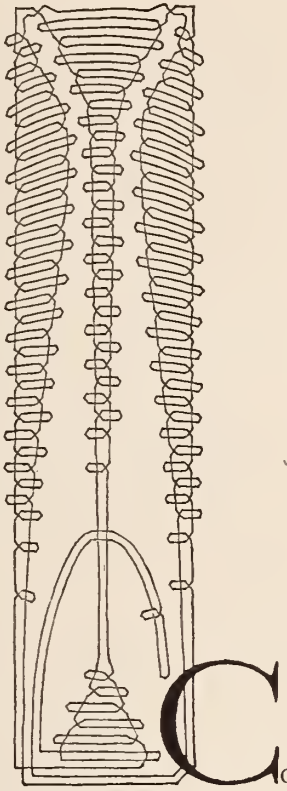
influence on the progress of civilization. ℭ As American citizens we consider the declaration of our right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as the corner-stone of the structure of our democratic form of government. This principle applied to us as individuals we firmly believe to be fundamentally necessary when applied to nations. As a nation we have proved our belief in this principle by the declaration of Monroe's Doctrine nearly a century ago as well as by our recent behavior toward Cuba and by our present attitude toward Mexico. What we believe to be the truth for ourselves we believe to be the truth when applied to others. We believe in the right of every nation to life and to the freedom of self-development without interference by force from other nations, provided that such a freedom does not interfere with or violate the corresponding rights of other nations. ℭ The present great European war is a conflict between races on the one side espousing this liberal and democratic principle and races on the other side boastfully proclaiming that "might is right." It is a struggle of races for the possession of the right to their individuality—their national soul—against races denying the weak nations the same right to live as the strong nations. ℭ Prussia's history is a history of conquest, of Germanization, and of preparations for more conquest and Germanization. Even with a knowledge but not a full realization of these facts, the world generally, previous to this war, would have resented on behalf of the German race any insinuation that such crimes as have been committed by the Germans in this war could be claimed to be possible of perpe-

tration by them. During this war, however, the true earmarks of the national character of the Prussianized Germans have become amply known to the world. The world can well form its own judgment about a race that can celebrate and have its school children participate in the celebration of the sinking of the Lusitania! What rights and justice can a conquered nation expect from such a race? The forcible expatriation of the Poles by Prussia in the years preceding the great war as well as the Prussian behavior in Belgium and northern France since the beginning of the war makes Prussia a proper ally of Austria and of Turkey, whose Serbian and Armenian crimes are only a continuation of their histories so replete with murder, oppression, and injustice. Austria's treatment of Bohemia after the Bohemian period of the thirty years' war was one of constant forcible expatriation, murder, and attempts at a complete annihilation of the Bohemian people. Her continued fearful oppression and enslavement of the Bohemian people for two centuries and her untiring zeal to destroy all the cultural products of centuries of the Bohemian people, especially their literature, and to erase the glorious history of Bohemia from the pages of history of the nations of the world was the application of "might is right" of victorious German Austria over Bohemia. Were it not for the fact that the blessings flowing from the French Revolution spread over Bohemia, as well as over Europe generally, it is not unlikely that Austria would have continued her fearful rule in Bohemia during the past century as she carried it on during the two preceding

centuries. Austria's moderation in her persecution was not due to any change of her innate nature, but was rather the result of general European pressure in favor of humanity and toleration and also due partly to dynastic fears. Austria's practised motto ever has been *Oppression and Injustice.* ❧ Under a misrule such as Austria is guilty of over the various peoples of her empire, the peace and progress loving Bohemian race cannot and will not forever remain. In the last half century during which the Bohemian people wrested a small portion of their inherent rights of self-development, they have produced an enviable literature, they have advanced science in all its branches, they have contributed wealth to music and art. Through their own efforts against odds, they have placed themselves as the leading intellectual people in Austria-Hungary. Among them illiteracy is practically unknown. ❧ A race with such a strong determination and character has a true and real soul. The Bohemian race to-day is worthy of its illustrious past; it is worthy of its national heroes, Hus, Comenius, and Havlicek. It has the right to self-development unhindered by an undesirable patriarchal government of its German neighbors. It has a right to absolute independence, political as well as cultural. It is hoped that this war may bring, among other things, an end to the vicious rule of minority over majority, of Austrian Germans over the Bohemians, and of the Magyars over the Slovaks and the Serbs.

ALOIS F. KOVARIK

New Haven, Conn., January 20, 1917

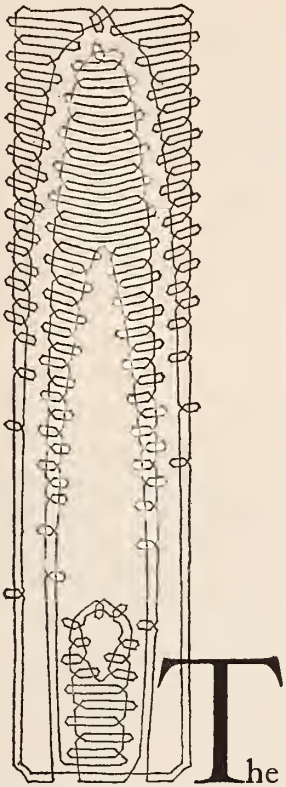


I Conference of dependent or oppressed nationalities—the very title indicates that it is unnecessary to dwell upon the wrongs suffered by the Bohemian (Czech) and Slovak peoples under the Austrian and Magyar régimes. ❧ The world is beginning at last to realize that the German minority in Austria, during the past four decades with the active support of Berlin and always actively supported by the Hapsburg dynasty, for generations has been seeking to throttle the legitimate aspirations of non-German nationalities. ❧ The myth of Mag-

yar chivalry and Magyar fairness is finally being dispelled. The world now understands that Hungary is governed by an Asiatic oligarchy of Magyar nobility, under whose régime the Slovaks have suffered, and are even now undergoing, a veritable martyrdom. ⁂ For the purposes of my remarks knowledge of these facts may and must be taken for granted. ⁂ The condition of dependent or oppressed nationalities presents a problem which no country, least of all the United States, can afford to ignore, not merely as a matter of abstract justice and righteousness, but in its own interest. ⁂ The causes of the present war are manifold, but no one will gainsay that one of the contributing factors to its outbreak was the failure properly to solve and adjust the mutual relations of European nationalities, large and small. The war shall have been fought in vain if it does not lead to a solution of these problems. Failure to solve them aright will keep alive sparks from which will be kindled in no distant future another devastating conflagration. ⁂ The President of the United States in a recent speech declared this to be the last war during which this country could remain neutral. ⁂ The purpose of this conference is said to be the formulation of public opinion on these questions. ⁂ If we are to be successful in our aim, we must first define at least the fundamental principle, or principles, upon which we may all agree. This foundation for future discussion undoubtedly is what has become known as the principle of nationality, or, in other words, the principle that each nation, no matter how small, numerically speaking, has the right to govern itself according to its

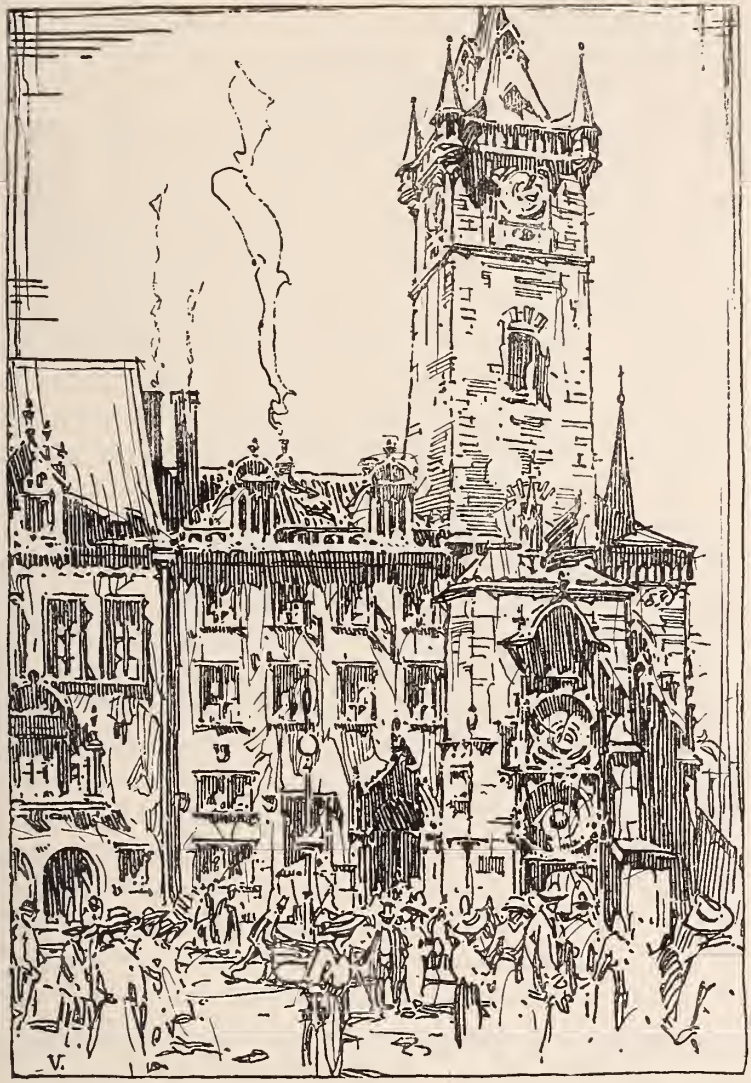
own lights and without outside interference. ❧ The value of little nations is only now beginning to be truly appreciated. "The little nations, with their own "languages, their own literatures, their glory in their "own history, were never more alive, never more "important, than they are to-day in this conflict of "gigantic Empires," correctly declared Mr. Lloyd George in a recent speech. ❧ The world undoubtedly has already lost very much because of the oppression of small nationalities. Scandinavian contributions to culture—not Kultur!—and to civilization are very substantial. They were made possible largely because the Scandinavians as nations have enjoyed an untrammelled development. A nation fighting for its existence could have hardly given to the world an Ibsen or a Björnson. ❧ The value of Czech literature is still little known. Many a masterpiece has been penned in the musical language of this nation living in the heart of Europe. But what would have been the fruits of Czech industry and Czech genius had not the nation been compelled for centuries to struggle for mere existence? ❧ No thoughtful man or woman, no normal human being, believes in the doctrine of supermen evolved in Germany—we may not care to go so far as to call it a German doctrine. No one will subscribe to the doctrine of super-nations. ❧ The right of small nations to exist, even in the light of purely utilitarian reasons, as important factors in the onward march of the human race, needs no elaborate vindication. ❧ The expression "principle of nationality" stands, therefore, for an important force in the scheme of human affairs. But to speak of the principle of nation-

ality is to indulge in generalities. What you undoubtedly expect, and what should be done here clearly and without equivocation, is that the spokesmen of the various nationalities represented here apply the principle of nationality to specific facts; that they come with a definite programme, at least in outline, in so far as the nation they represent is concerned. ℜThis conference has a constructive mission and unless this is fulfilled, it will have been held in vain and our hopes of influencing American public opinion along the right lines will dissolve in a fog of mere words, futile criticisms, and glittering generalities.



II The Czech demands find expression in a manifesto of the Bohemian (Czech) foreign committee, issued in Paris on the 14th day of November, 1915, from which the following at least should be quoted: "All Bohemian political parties " have up to this time been fighting for a qualified in- " dependence within the limits of Austria-Hungary. " But the events of this terrible war and the reckless " violence of Vienna constrain us to claim independ- " ence without regard to Austria-Hungary.— *We ask* "*for an independent Bohemian-Slovak state.*—The Bo-

" hemian people are now convinced that they must
" strike out for themselves. Austria was defeated not
" only by Russia, but by the little, despised Serbia, and
" is now a dependency of Germany. To-day Berlin
" has galvanized this corpse, but it is the last effort.
" Austria-Hungary has abdicated. We have lost all
" confidence in its vitality; it has no longer any rea-
" son for existence. By its incapacity, by its voluntary
" subordination to Germany it has convinced the
" whole world that the former belief in the mission
" of Austria is out of date, forever overthrown by the
" European war. Those who defended the usefulness,
" even the necessity of Austria-Hungary, and at one
" time the great Bohemian historian and statesman
" Palacky was one of them, thought of Austria as a
" federal system of nations and lands with equal rights.
" But Austria-Hungary as a dualistic monster became
" the oppressor of all who were not Germans or Mag-
" yars. It is a standing threat to the peace of Europe,
" a mere tool of Germany seeking conquest in the
" East, a state having no destiny of its own, unable
" to construct an organic state composed of a number
" of equal, free, progressive races. The dynasty living
" in its traditions of absolutism manages to maintain
" the semblance of the former world power through
" the undemocratic coöperation of a sterile nobility,
" a bureaucracy that belongs to no race, and a body
" of army officers that is against every race." This
is the authoritative expression of the Bohemian po-
sition. I have neither the right, nor the desire, to de-
viate in the smallest degree from the programme so
defined. Independence—that one word embodies



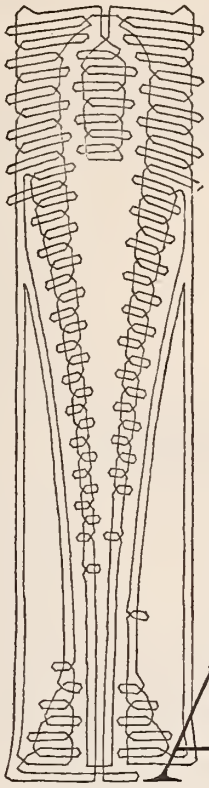
The Horologe-Tower (built in the year 1474) of the City Hall of Prague, the Capital of Bohemia

the whole Bohemian programme. ℭ I do not lose sight of the fact that under favorable conditions the principle of nationality may find realization in a federal state, and, as you have noticed in the excerpt from our manifesto, Czechs and Slovaks at one time sought to make of Austria such a federal state, where the various nationalities embraced within its boundaries would be treated with fairness and even-handed justice. ℭ The hope in the possibility of a federal Austria is so persistent that it is worth while to endeavor to lay this ghost once and forever, and especially to demonstrate that there is no legitimate comparison between Austria and our own federal government. This is especially desirable because even the printed statement of the aims of this conference, formulated by the committee, holds: "That a federal form of govern-" ment offers the most satisfactory method of giving " local self-government in a country great in terri-" tory or complex in population." ℭ Let us remember that the American federal state, to some extent at least, is made possible by the underlying uniformity of Anglo-Saxon traditions and culture, and by uniformity of language, the English language. Whether we like this or not, we must accept the fact that the profoundest influences in American life are Anglo-Saxon traditions and Anglo-Saxon culture. As a nation we are different from the English, of course, but only different. The mainsprings of our national thought fundamentally are quite similar. Even those of us who are not of Anglo-Saxon descent unconsciously use Anglo-Saxon methods of thought and build upon Anglo-Saxon traditions. ℭ This uniform-

ity of outlook and uniformity of language outweigh many centrifugal tendencies, caused, for instance, by divergent economic interests; tendencies which otherwise might seriously endanger the stability of the American state—using the term state in its broadest sense, and not speaking of our American political subdivisions. ℵ In various press comments upon the death of Emperor Francis Joseph one could even notice statements referring to Austrian hyphenism, as if American hyphenism and the aspirations of the various Austrian nationalities could be compared! It must never be forgotten that, for instance, the Czechs in Europe live within their own historic boundaries, within their own old home, where once they were masters of their own destiny, and where they enjoyed rights of which they were deprived, and still are being deprived, by force. ℵ The difference between European nations and the United States was strikingly set forth some years ago by Mr. Joaquim Nabuco, late Brazilian Ambassador to this country, in the following words: "You are a nation in some respects of "a unique type. . . . Every other nation is, or was, "composed of a race or of separate races, speaking each "its own language; you are a nation formed by the "fusion of races of different languages, brought, by "superior inducements, to speak only the hereditary "language of the country. In other words, you are "a nation formed of nations by their own will. Here "lies all the difference: you are formed by free im-"migration, not by conquest. . . . This is the first and "greatest influence I would point out of the discov-"ery of America on civilization: the appearance on

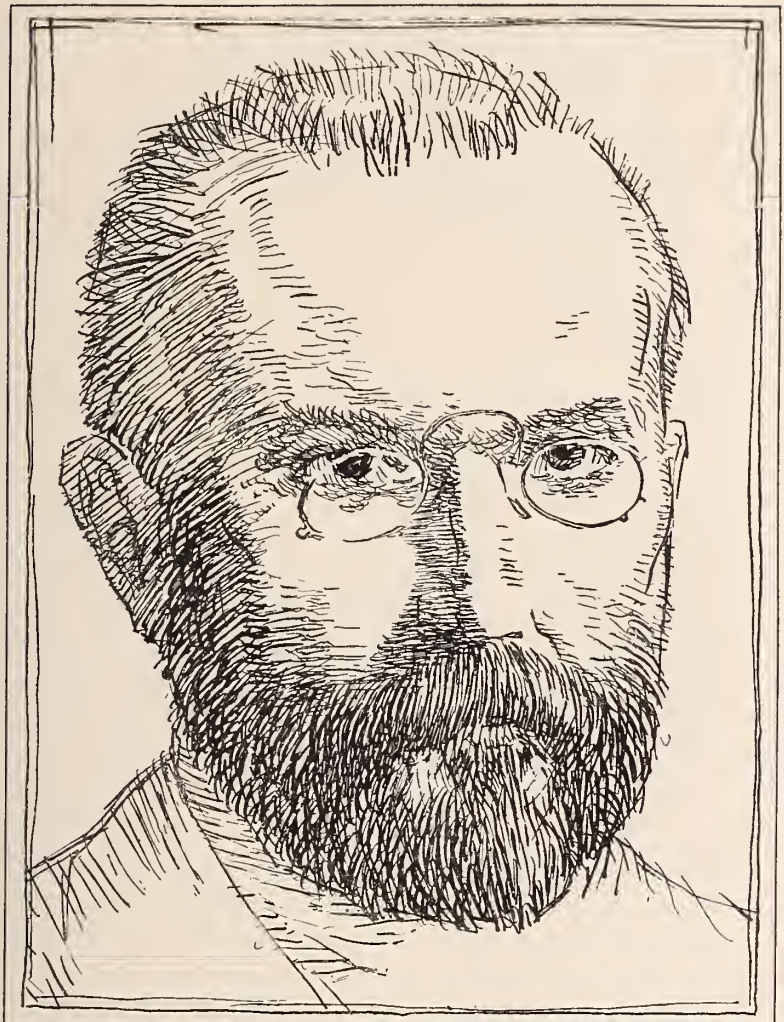
" earth of an immense continent destined to be the " new home of the old European races, where they " would meet and mix and speak the same language, " while in the native soil their old stocks would con- " tinue separated and up till now belligerent. In other " words, a fact never seen or imagined before, of " a mankind, a new mankind, formed by self-selec- " tion." ❧ The ultimate test of the right of any state and any government to exist is to be found in the treatment it accords its various citizens. Unless it treats its citizens, or, as the European term runs, its subjects, equally, it loses the right to loyal support on the part of these subjects or citizens. If this test is applied to Austria, Austria appears to be the most dismal failure in modern history.

III



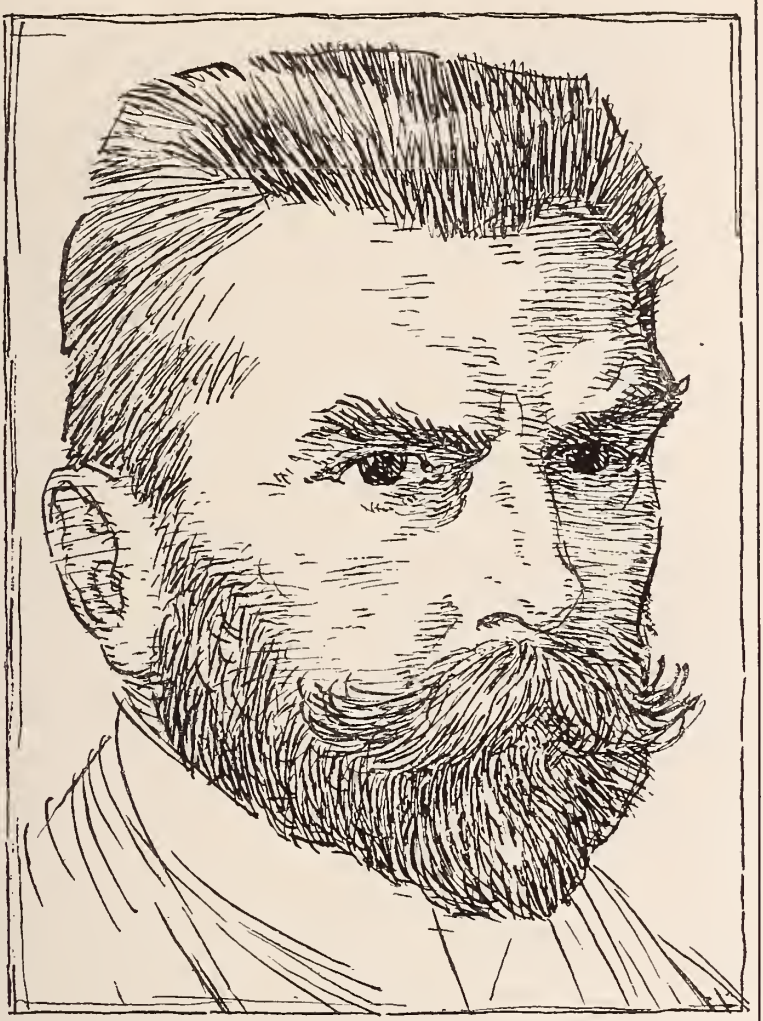
Austria, dominated by the Germans, has become an essential feature of the German scheme of world dominion. One of the troubles with the German schemes of development has been that the Germans have always held Germanization of other nationalities a prime requisite of their plans. This constitutes an important difference between what may be termed English and French imperialism and German schemes of expansion. The German "Drang nach Osten" cannot be realized without Austria tied hand and foot to Ber-

lin, and without keeping in bondage the Slav nationalities in Central and Southeastern Europe. When German dreams of world dominion were endangered by the victories of the Balkan League in 1913, the German attitude found striking expression in a speech of the Chancellor, delivered April 7, 1913, in the German Reichstag in support of increased military appropriations; from it the following deserves to be quoted verbatim: "For the future it is "decisive that instead of European Turkey, whose "life as a state has become passive, have appeared "states that show a remarkable strength of life. We "all have an interest in seeing this power prove itself "of the best in peace as it has in war, and to see the "Balkan states grow in close economic and cultural "contact with their neighbors and with the group "of Western powers. Thus they shall also be factors "making for progress and European peace. *But in "spite of this, one thing is certain: If it should ever come "to an European war wherein Slavs and Germans shall "stand against each other, then it would mean damage "to the Germans if in the present system of equilibrium "southern Slav states were to take the place hitherto occupied by European Turkey.*" These are thoughts couched of course in diplomatic language, but it is obvious that even then the German Chancellor had in mind the bugaboo of a racial conflict between Slavs and Germans; not because Germany had suffered any real damage, but because Southern Slavs had thrown off the yoke of Turkey and had asserted their right to growth as independent nations. Such was the political philosophy which dominated Ber-



Prof. T. G. MASARYK, Member of Austrian Parliament, Leader of movement for Bohemian (Czech) Independence. Sentenced to be executed on apprehension; his daughter was imprisoned without trial

lin in 1913; it also dominated the most influential circles in Vienna. ℭ Of a piece with the speech of the German Chancellor is a Vienna letter published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, on the 13th of May of the same year. The letter is entitled *Oesterreichische Katastrophenpolitik;* the writer thereof speaks of the fact that owing to Serbian growth Austria had been twice compelled to increase its military expenses. He indicates that the real instigator of all these alleged troubles is Russia, and that there is just one way of stopping all this: "To destroy the tools of pan-Slav-"ism; to subjugate the small neighbors, to destroy "the Russian Empire, and to form a number of buf-"fer states under Austrian and German protectorate "between the remnants of the Russian Empire and "Central Europe." ℭ The writer is refreshingly frank in saying that the internal conditions of Austria require the same measures; that it has been impossible to solve the Bohemian question, the Polish-Ruthenian question, and other similar problems; that these matters endanger Austria in its existence, and that even if all this leads to an European war, the Central Powers have nothing to fear, because as yet they are stronger than Russia and her friends. ℭ The writer declares that this is not only his opinion, but the opinion of responsible Austrian persons of importance. We can readily see the connection between this letter and the speech of the German Chancellor hereinbefore referred to. The aim thus expressed was simply this: The crushing of the Slav nationalities in Austria, the subjugation of Southern Slavs, and the destruction of Russia. ℭ The writer even goes so far

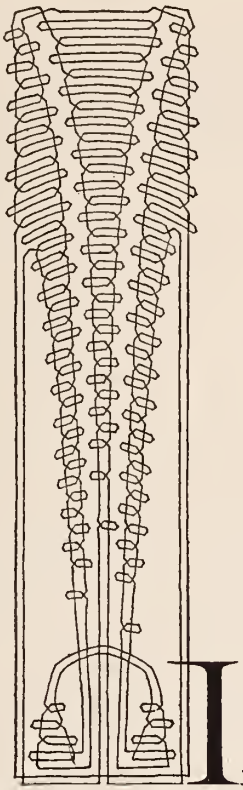


Dr. Charles Kramarzh, Leader of the Bohemian (Czech) delegation to the Parliament at Vienna. Is now in prison, after his sentence of death had been commuted to a term of fifteen years at hard labor

as to say that in any event Austria has nothing to lose, because with the growth of Slav nationalities in Austria she is doomed to destruction any way, and that in a world war she may have a chance to save herself. He says almost literally that a sudden catastrophe is preferable to terror without end. ✠ In reading and thinking of these astonishing documents, we must of course realize that when these writers and speakers deal with the question of the destruction of Austria, they fear the destruction of German privileges and German domination in Austria; for it is well known that the utmost the Slavs within Austria ever demanded were equal rights, and that the Germans were unwilling to concede this moderate demand. The Bohemian white sheet of paper had become proverbial in Austrian politics, and Bohemian leading statesmen told the Germans time and again to place on that sheet of paper all their demands as to the rights Germans should enjoy in Austria, and that Bohemians will have no objections to these, provided that the Bohemians have and enjoy the same rights in their own native land. ✠ Only the other day, in discussing the entry of Roumania into the war, the *Pesti Hirlap*, an influential Budapest paper, declared that Austria-Hungary must decide between Slavism and Germanism—this in an empire, the majority of which is Slav. ✠ I firmly believe that this war will end with victory for the Allies. A temporary truce, called a peace, may be patched up, but if so, we shall simply be confronted with a series of spasmodic struggles, resembling the Napoleonic wars of more than a century ago, and the ultimate outcome will be that

German dreams of world dominion will be doomed. ⁂ A year from now, two years from now, five, ten, or twenty years from now, in any event at some future time, those parts of Austria inhabited by Italians will be joined to Italy; those parts inhabited by Roumanians to Roumania; those by Serbians to the new Serbia; and Galicia undoubtedly will constitute a part of the future autonomous Poland. ⁂ When this logical historical process is carried out, even if a remnant of Austria should be preserved, the only nations left within the new Austria will be the Germans, the Magyars, the Bohemians, and the Slovaks. ⁂ It will be seen from a mere statement of this fact that such Austria would be in the future, as it has been in the past, a menace to European peace. ⁂ In such a state the Czechs and Slovaks would constitute the minority. The internal conditions of such a state would be volcanic. ⁂ Austria so mutilated would mean the perpetuation of oppression of Czechs and Slovaks by the German and Magyar element, and since oppression inevitably breeds resistance, here again would be a foundation for future upheavals. ⁂ A mere statement of this condition, once made, seems to show conclusively that the only possible solution of the Austrian problem is to get rid of the Austrian Empire once and forever, and not to permit the repetition of experiences the world had to undergo while Turkey was permitted to pose as an European power. ⁂ After all, the Austrian question is the Turkish problem in another form. Austria can be no more federalized than European Turkey. To permit Austria to exist in any form when this war is concluded

is merely to delay the solution of a problem that will never down. And in the life of nations, as well as of individuals, delay and procrastination, the tendency to postpone a final decision, is a crime for which penalties are sure to follow. Austria has lost its right to exist. Even now it has few of the attributes of a really sovereign state. It is a mere vassal of Germany. There is no reason for maintaining the ghost of life in a corpse from which the spirit has flown never to return. So much for what might be called the negative side of the Czech problem. What about the positive, the affirmative phase? Can a self-sustaining Bohemian-Slovak State be reconstructed? Are there present the necessary state-forming elements?



IV

If a nation is conscious of its nationality, if it demands independence and liberty, if it has proved the possibility of such independence by its economic and cultural development, its right to independence is removed from the sphere of debatable questions. The Czechs are intensely conscious of their nationality. Bohemia, once one of the most powerful of European states, lost its independence only as a result of the application of brute force. The Czech people never voluntarily surrendered their right to independence, and against the

rights of nations there is no statute of limitations. ℭWhen the war broke out, of all the belligerent countries only Austria failed to convoke its parliament, such as it is. When this failure to maintain even the semblance of parliamentary life began to be the subject of international comment, the Austrian government commenced negotiations with various political parties. It was especially afraid of the Czech protest. It asked for a pro-Austrian declaration. But cajolery, promises, threats, nothing could induce the Czechs to declare even in mild terms for Austria. The Czech political parties could not be forced to condemn the anti-Austrian activities of those Czech leaders who were fortunate enough to escape from Austria and are actively engaged in the movement for Bohemian independence. Even promises of clemency for Czech political leaders sentenced to death for alleged treason to the Austrian state were of no avail. Only recently the cable brought a report that an offer of such an infamous bargain was rejected by the Czechs. ℭThe civilized world is well aware of the fact that in spite of the fierce opposition of the Austrian government and Austrian Germans to the development of the Czech people, this nationality has reached a plane surpassing that of any other nation in Austria, and that in literature and art it is second to no nation of its numerical strength. A nation that gave to the world men like Hus and Komensky, a nation that in modern times has produced a host of writers of the highest rank, many philosophers, statesmen, and gifted journalists, such a nation is certainly capable of governing itself. Economically and

financially the Czech countries are the richest of the present Austrian "provinces," and when freed from oppressive taxation, discriminating in favor of financially "passive" Austrian lands, the independent Bohemian-Slovak State will be even richer. At the present time 62.7 per cent of the burden of Austrian taxation is borne by the Czech countries, while the rest of Austria carries only 37.3 per cent. The Bohemian lands surpass the other Austrian lands in the production of grain; 38 per cent of the grain lands of Austria is found in Bohemia. Of the coal found in Austria, 83 per cent is mined in the Bohemian lands; 60 per cent of the Austrian iron is found there; 90 per cent, if not more, of the sugar factories of Austria are located in the lands of the Bohemian crown; the textile industry is one of large proportions, and leather, paper, furniture, and electro-technical industries are of importance. When we take into consideration the undeveloped resources of Slovakia, which naturally will form a part of the state, we see very readily that economically the future Bohemian-Slovak State will be amply able to stand on its own feet. At this point we may emphasize again distinctly the fact that joining the Bohemians in their future state should be the Slovaks of Hungary. The world has by this time realized that in provoking the Great War the Magyar oligarchy was *particeps criminis;* this war was not only a German war, but it was a Magyar war as well. The non-Magyar nationalities in Hungary in the past have been oppressed in true Asiatic style, and the Magyars participated in the intrigues leading to the war, because they hoped

that as a result of the expected German and Austrian victory their domination in Hungary would be perpetuated and their dominion extended. Budapest has been the most faithful ally of Berlin. ❧ The Slovaks form a part of the same ethnic group as the Bohemians; they desire to be joined with the Bohemians in one state, and this wish should be gratified not only because it manifests a natural tendency, but also because it is in the interests of Europe to gratify it. ❧ As a matter of fact an independent Bohemian-Slovak State will have a population of over twelve million inhabitants, and in territorial extent will be eighth among twenty-two European sovereignties, and it cannot be said that such a state would be small. ❧ Moreover, is not the belief in the necessity of large states one of the theories which are destined to be abandoned? Already voices have arisen that certain states have become too large to manage (Lord Bryce, Mr. L. P. Jacks, editor of the *Hibbert Journal*). Mr. Louis D. Brandeis, now of the United States Supreme Court, has shown that even under modern conditions certain business units can become so large as to be physically incapable of successful administration. May this not be equally true of states, especially polyethnic states? ❧ But it may be said that it is hard to reconstruct a state, it is not easy to organize a new state. Yes, there is no easy road to anything worth while. The road of progress has never been free of thorns. It was not easy to organize the United States of America, and the period of experimentation under the Articles of Confederation was full of trials and tribulations. For a long time it was a question whether

in America we should have an aggregation of loose-jointed states, or whether a foundation for a real nation would be laid. Yet the difficulties did not prevent the fathers from undertaking the task. ℭ That the new state would not have direct access to the sea seems to some to be a serious obstacle. ℭ Access to the sea is important, but with modern methods of communication not as important as it was in the past. After all, the sea affords simply a means of communication. Whether we are restricted to communication by the sea, or by rail, makes little difference if a country is confronted by high tariffs. ℭ However, an independent Bohemian-Slovak State can be connected with the future Serbo-Croatia by giving the strip of land at the Hungarian frontier in the west, either to Serbia, or one half of it (north) to Bohemia, the other (south) to Serbia. This corridor will be formed of parts of the counties of Pozsony (Pressburg), Sopron (Oedenburg), Moson (Wieselburg), and Vas (Eisenburg). Such a corridor would give Bohemia access to the Serbo-Croatian ports. Economic rights of way for land-locked states are advocated by Mr. Toynbee in his new work (*The New Europe*), and Mr. Toynbee thus indicates how the problem of access to the sea may be solved. ℭ It is also true that the future Bohemian-Slovak State will have a German and perhaps a small Magyar minority, but in central and eastern Europe hardly any state can be constructed without certain national minorities. In the present instance these minorities are not as large as the false Austrian and Magyar statistics and the unequal and unfair suffrage rules would make it appear. ℭ It ought



OUTLINE MAP OF THE FUTURE BOHEMIAN-SLOVAK

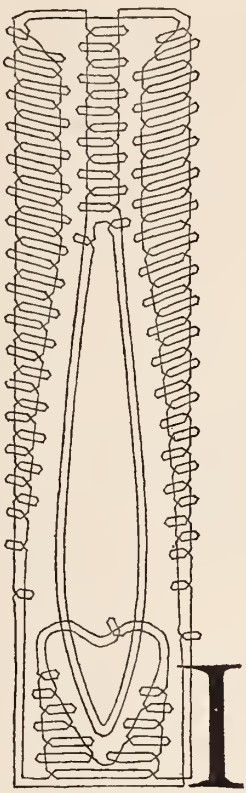


STATE : BOHEMIA, MORAVIA, SILESIA, AND SLOVAKIA

to be fairly easy to safeguard the interests of a German and Magyar minority in a Bohemian-Slovak State, certainly easier than it would be to protect the rights of Bohemians and Slovaks in a deformed Austria. ❧ It is rather amusing to see the concern some people exhibit over the possible oppression of a small German and Magyar minority by the Czechs and Slovaks, although they never appeared to be very much exercised over the oppression of the majority of Czechs and Slovaks by a small minority of Germans and Magyars. But in any event, the rights of such minorities certainly should be regulated in some fashion, and there can be no objection to this. The federalization of Austria and the safeguarding of the rights of Slavs in Austria can be achieved only at the point of Allied guns. This is no easier and perhaps decidedly more difficult than to dissolve Austria and get rid of the problem forever. ❧ Basing the statement on historical records, it is not to be expected that the Bohemians will oppress the Germans. In spheres where the Czechs had any degree of self-government, as for instance in school matters, the Germans were never denied their legitimate needs. The municipality of Prague has always furnished adequate school facilities for the small German minority in Prague, and this is decidedly more than was done by municipalities in the hands of Germans for their Bohemian minorities. ❧ The thought cannot be elaborated in this paper, but it is worth noting that a policy of denationalization of other peoples is one peculiar almost wholly to the Germans. After all, there is such a thing as psychology of nations, and

the Slavs have never been noted for attempts to impose their language upon other nationalities. Russia is not an exception to the rule. If we stop to think about it, it is immediately recognized that the reactionary policies of Russia have been due largely to the Junkers from Russian Baltic Provinces who are of German descent. ❧ The factors thus enumerated, the right of any nation to independence once its possibility is demonstrated, the necessity of dissolving Austria in the interests of permanent peace, I believe to be decisive of the merits of the Czech case. ❧ I would not even fear the joining of purely German parts of Austria to the German Empire. This would carry the principle of nationality to its logical conclusion. It would perhaps strengthen Germany absolutely, but very seriously weaken it relatively. To the German Empire would be added a few million Germans, but it would be deprived of the support of a much larger number of Slavs, who are being made use of to fight the battles of their bitterest enemy, and one bent upon their subjugation, even upon their destruction. ❧ The Bohemian question is simplicity itself when we consider the problem of small nationalities in Europe generally, and when we realize that to regenerate Europe means also the reconstruction of Poland, Serbo-Croatia, and the freeing of the French and Danes in Germany. Yet, whether difficult or easy, these questions must be faced unflinchingly. ❧ Again, let it not be forgotten that the Czech question is one of restoration; that the Czechs are asking for something which *de jure* they never surrendered. The Hapsburgs were called to the Bohemian throne

by the free will of the representatives of the Bohemian State, and they undertook by solemn oaths and pledges to protect and safeguard the independence of this state. The violation of such pledges on their part, and the deprivation of the Czechs of their independence by force, does not do away with their legal rights, so that the Czech claim has the strongest possible legal sanction. ℜ The fact that the Czechs at one time had a strong and powerful state, well organized, as states were organized then, is also a sufficient proof of inherent political capacity. ℜ The Bohemian question has become an international problem par excellence. It was Bismarck who maintained that the power that rules Bohemia rules Europe. Such a problem cannot be permitted to remain unsolved. The only possible solution which will guarantee permanent peace, and which will also be fair to the nationalities concerned, is the reconstruction of a Bohemian-Slovak State. ℜ Victor Hugo had the theft of Alsace-Lorraine in mind when he said: "Another war, alas! Yes, it is necessary." The Czechs firmly believe that at the conclusion of this war the Bohemian question will be solved, and that they will regain their independence; but if the problem is not definitely disposed of, and disposed of right, we shall have to paraphrase Victor Hugo's exclamation: "Another war, alas! Yes, it is unavoidable."



I believe it was Walter Lippman who said that the highest ideal and aim of statesmanship is to satisfy human needs. This is to be understood in the broadest possible sense. The highest ideal of statesmanship in its international sense can only be the satisfaction of legitimate national needs. Just as long as such legitimate national needs are not satisfied, the situation in Europe will be full of explosives, and just so long the peace of the world will be menaced. Especially we in America should bear in mind that the problem of small nation-

alities is also one of extension of democracy. Democracy in a nation will never be realized until all individuals within the nation are afforded an equality of opportunity; democracy among nations will never be realized until all nations, be they large or small, are afforded an equal opportunity to develop and grow legitimately. ❧ The mere existence of Austria has become a denial of the right of numerous nations not only to develop, but to exist. These nations will not submit to the lot of slaves, and their resistance will be a constant danger signal to everybody that all is not well with the world, that a new catastrophe may result any moment because of their resistance to oppression; and this necessarily would again involve the whole world. ❧ So we must come to the conclusion that even America is vitally interested in the Austrian, and, more specifically, the Bohemian problem. ❧ Is it too much to hope that American statesmanship will rise high enough to demand a solution of such questions, now agitating the world, and that it will insist upon such definite solution at the future peace conference? ❧ A school of thought has arisen in this country, small as yet to be sure, which seems to think that the only practical statesmanship is to have in mind national interests in the narrowest sense of the term. Those entertaining such a narrow viewpoint should be reminded of a passage in Washington's *Farewell Address*, a passage seldom, if ever, thought of: "It will be worthy of a free, en- " lightened, and, at no distant period, a great nation, " to give to mankind the magnanimous and too novel " example of a people always guided by an exalted

"justice and benevolence. Who can doubt that, in "the course of times and things, the fruits of such a "plan would richly repay any temporary advantages "which might be lost by a steady adherence to it? "Can it be that Providence has not connected the "permanent felicity of a nation with its virtue? The "experiment, at least, is recommended by every sen- "timent which ennobles human nature." Let us realize that so-called impractical statesmanship is sometimes practical in the highest degree, and that often what is considered practical statesmanship in the long run proves itself highly impractical. ⁂ Mazzini once declared: "The first people with faith and en- "ergy to cry to other peoples: 'I am fighting for you "all. Follow me,' this people will give its name to an "age." ⁂ Shall this be the American age?

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